

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

8 February 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with John R. Blandford, Chief Counsel,  
House Armed Services Committee, re Jack Anderson's  
Article Alleging U.S. SR-71 Flights Over Red China

1. In response to his query Friday about the 2 February 1971 Jack Anderson column alleging SR-71s flown by American pilots were flying over Communist China, I advised Russ Blandford that Anderson had taken several unrelated facts and put them together to produce an erroneous assertion.

25X1 2. I told Blandford that SR-71s were flying over Korea and North Vietnam, but that no manned aircraft had flown over Red China since [redacted] (flights over China have been made by drone aircraft). With further reference to the Anderson article, [redacted] OSA, who provided the information for me, indicated that the reference to U-2 pilots with "kaleidoscopic cameras" must have been to stereoscopic cameras which [redacted] While the Chinese have improved their radar somewhat as indicated in the article they are still using SA-2 antiaircraft missiles. [redacted]

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[redacted]  
Deputy Legislative Counsel

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2 February 1971.

ILLEGIB

~~The Washington Merry-Go-Round~~

# SR-71s Eye China From 80,000 Feet

**By Jack Anderson**

American crews are flying spy planes over Red China, thus risking another U-2 incident, to photograph military developments on the Chinese mainland.

The downing in Russia of a U-2 spy plane, with a sheepish American pilot aboard, broke up a Big Four conference and precipitated a crisis with the Kremlin in 1960. During the uproar that followed, an embarrassed President Eisenhower halted U-2 flights over Russia.

But U-2 pilots with kaleidoscopic cameras continued to spy from the stratosphere upon China. They now, however, fly pencil-shaped, SR-71 reconnaissance jets, which soar faster than 2,000 miles per hour and higher than 80,000 feet.

The Chinese, meanwhile, are developing more sophisticated radar and anti-aircraft missiles, which might bring down a future SR-71 and repeat the U-2 embarrassment all over again.

Certainly, it's no secret to Red agents that two-man American crews blast off regularly from Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa, in mid-morning on spy flights over the Chinese mainland. They streak almost straight up until they disappear like tiny black needles into the distant silver lining.

SR-71 reconnaissance planes each can film 60,000 square miles in one hour.

In late afternoon, the returning spy planes contact the tower at Kadena with a code signal. The controllers immediately warn off other aircraft. Then one by one, the SR-71s "drop the box" on their first pass.

Translated from intelligence lingo, this means the film packets are dropped by parachute. The objective is to make sure the precious film, obtained at such jeopardy to the lives of the volunteer pilot and reconnaissance officer, is safe even if the multi-million-dollar aircraft should crash on landing.

At Kadena, the black, two-engine, delta-winged SR-71s are set apart from the buffalolike B-52 bombers. There isn't a spy on Okinawa who doesn't know the mission of the unmarked spy planes. Communist runners sometimes wait on the roads for the SR-71s to take off so the news can be flashed by clandestine radio to the Chinese.

An Air Force spokesman, not unexpectedly, refused to comment on the spy flights. All he would say was that the SR-71 flies so high that "most residents along the routes are unaware of its presence."

## Washing Whirl

**Too Much Economy** — The White House put economy ahead of good judgment in dispatching only one funeral plane to Georgia for Sen. Richard Russell's funeral. State Secretary Bill Rogers, Defense Secretary Mel Laird, CIA Director Dick Helms and every member of the Joint Chiefs were loaded aboard the same plane. The dispatchers shuddered at the thought of what would happen if the plane should crash.

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